

## **The political dilemma in the face of dictatorship in Venezuela and Nicaragua**

Antonio De La Cruz

*Executive Director*

24/Jul/2018

The former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation under the presidency of Boris Yeltsin, Andrey Vladimirovich Kozyrev (1991-1996), declared on Fareed Zakaria's show (GPS) on Sunday that in his youth "Moscow was sponsoring the political motto Proletarians of all countries, unite! (Manifesto of the Communist Party); and today what he hears from Moscow is Autocrats of all countries, unite! That is, Putin promotes the union of autocrats to end the values of American liberal democracy.

According to the non-governmental organization *Freedom House*, in 2017 democracy faced its most serious crisis in more than a decade, because its fundamental principles - the guarantees of free and fair elections, the rights of minorities, freedom of the press and the rule of law - were attacked all over the world. 71 out of 175 countries suffered net declines in political rights and civil liberties, and only 35 states made progress. Last year marked the twelfth consecutive year in which global freedom falls.

It also happened with the measurement made by *The Economist Democracy Index* in 2017. The average global score fell. Nearly 89 countries experienced a fall in their total record compared to 2016, three times more than the number of countries that achieved an improvement (27); the worst performance since 2010-2011 after the global economic and financial crisis and the rest of the countries (51) stagnated, their index results remained unchanged in relation to the previous year.

A quarter of a century ago, at the end of the Cold War, it seemed that totalitarianism had finally been defeated and liberal democracy had won the great ideological battle of the 20th century (Francis Fukuyama).

According to *The Economist*, most Latin American countries recorded minor changes in their overall scores in 2017. The region remains the most democratic in the developing world. However, the two countries changed their category. Ecuador improved, went from being a "hybrid regime" to an "imperfect democracy". Venezuela, on the contrary, abandoned the "hybrid regime" to become an "authoritarian regime," joining Cuba in that category in the continent, which reflects the continuous slide of Venezuela towards dictatorship.

Therefore, the Venezuelan democratic forces should face the Maduro regime as a Caribbean dictatorship the same way the dictatorships of the 20th century were fought in Central America

and the Caribbean, those of Anastasio Somoza in Nicaragua, Rafael Leónidas Trujillo in the Dominican Republic, Batista in Cuba, Pérez Jiménez in Venezuela, Ríos Montt in Guatemala, Duvalier in Haiti, Romero Mena in El Salvador and Manuel Antonio Noriega in Panama, to name a few.

All these dictators used the State to repress opponents in the same way as Nicolás Maduro and Daniel Ortega do today, using paramilitary groups - colectivos in Venezuela and Sandinista mobs in Nicaragua - to fight organizations that struggle for democracy and human rights.

In these authoritarian regimes, violence is the only means of political expression to resolve ungovernability and "defend sovereignty". In addition, they use the pretext of violating the principle of "Non-interference in their internal affairs of the country" -the conductive thread of the authoritarian regimes of the 21st century- to isolate those who denounce the severe violations of human rights, seeking to neutralize the efforts of the international community that demands the restitution of democratic governability (individual and economic sanctions, OAS Democratic Charter).

Currently, the dictatorships of Maduro and Ortega can be defeated in three ways: a general civil uprising, a military uprising, or a military invasion. These three outs are interactive.

*In Venezuela, the most likely route of change is "the national unification of the resistance against the regime by hunger and the total delegitimization of the dominant political faction. This unification, never achieved by political parties, is already perceptible in the growing self-organization of the masses, generated by the lack of basic means of subsistence and the ridiculous salaries. Without national centers of leadership yet but with new leadership that is born in the struggle, this self-organization is spreading horizontally throughout the country. At the same time, there is a gradual change in its political character: it goes from economic protest to political rebellion. When the protest becomes massive and violent, a phenomenon that is inevitable in the face of frustration and hatred of the usurpers, the shoddy generals, and the troops will have their trial by fire: will they shoot against the people, like all class governments, or they will not?" (Heinz Dieterich).*

Therefore, the discussion of the opposition in Venezuela whether or not it participates in the electoral processes and the registration of the parties is part of the "pathological ways of relating to reality" of the dictatorship, because today the solution in Venezuela is outside the legality of the regime.

The internal and external factors in Venezuela converge for the civil uprising.

The latest analysis of the British bank Barclays foresees that the Maduro regime will lose the US company Citgo in September; it will default its sovereign and PDVSA debt with the corresponding demands; it will face the massification of private demands like ConocoPhillips, and there will be a process of isolation from the regime. Also, the IMF has just predicted an outbreak of inflation up to 1,000,000% by the end of 2018, and Nicolás Maduro loses his legitimacy of origin on January 10, 2019, when the presidential term expires, becoming an illegitimate president.

The struggle between democracy and the dictatorship of the proletariat during the Cold War (1947-1987) was won by liberal democracy (John Paul II, Reagan, and Thatcher). At that moment, liberal democracy coexisted with military dictatorships to overthrow communism from the Soviet Union and China (proxy war). However, when the communist threat disappeared, democracy fought dictatorships.

Democracy is again threatened around the world. This time it is for the authoritarian regimes, mainly by Putin and Xi Jinping. In Nicaragua and Venezuela, they adopt dictatorial practices to maintain power.

Hence, the structures that defended democracy in the Cold War must realign strategies to defeat authoritarian regimes this time. In Venezuela, it is "the national unification of the resistance against the regime due to hunger and the total delegitimization of the dominant political faction", because Maduro closed the electoral path in 2016.